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NEWS RELEASE

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List of Clandestine Drug Labs now Available on State Website

Potential renters or buyers of homes or apartments may want to check the Idaho Clandestine Drug Laboratory Site Property List before moving into a new residence. This list contains the addresses of known clandestine drug labs that have not been cleaned to meet state standards and may pose a health risk to unsuspecting renters or buyers. Currently, there are six Idaho locations on the property list, which includes sites in Boise, Aberdeen, Wallace, American Falls and Homedale.

Last legislative session, Idaho lawmakers approved rules that established a list of properties used as clandestine drug laboratories and a cleanup standard for these labs, methamphetamine specifically. Under the rules, a property identified by law enforcement as a clandestine drug laboratory will be posted with a sign and law enforcement will notify the property owner and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW). IDHW will then place the property on a ***Clandestine Drug Laboratory Site Property List***. In order to be removed from the list, the property owner must ensure that the property is either cleaned according to the cleanup standard or demolished.

According to the Clandestine Drug Lab Cleanup Act, property owners are responsible to make sure no one is living on the property until it is either cleaned or demolished and removed from the list. No local or state government entity was given the authority to monitor and enforce the requirement that the property remain vacant. The incentive for property owners to comply is civil liability if occupants of the unclean property are harmed; property owners are immune from civil liability if the property is cleaned to meet state standards. This immunity does not apply if the owner is the person alleged to have produced the clandestine drugs.

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When law enforcement officials discover an illegal drug lab, the bulk of lab-related materials are usually removed. However, it is possible that small amounts of contaminants may be left on floors, walls, counters, carpets, furniture, sinks, drains and ventilation systems. Though often found in small amounts, drug lab contaminants may pose health threats to persons exposed to them.

Although methamphetamine is not the only drug manufactured in clandestine drug labs, meth labs are the most common and are the focus of the cleanup standard. A property will meet the standard if the level of meth does not exceed 0.1 micrograms per one hundred square centimeters (0.1 µg/100cm²). This standard is based on what is believed to be conservative and protective, while at the same time achievable for cleanup contractors or property owners. Standards may be established for the cleanup of other controlled substances found in clandestine drug labs on a case-by-case basis.

When a property is cleaned by either a cleanup contractor or the property owner, clearance sampling must be conducted by a qualified industrial hygienist to verify that the cleanup standard is met. IDHW will then send the property owner a letter/certificate of delisting and the property will be removed from the *Clandestine Drug Laboratory Site Property List*.

Methamphetamine clandestine drug laboratories are usually found in residential areas, including houses, apartments and garages. They also are found in motels or in rural areas away from the general public. Mobile labs have been discovered in automobiles and recreational vehicles.

Meth labs often have an unusually sweet or strong odor such as ether, ammonia or auto parts cleaner. The windows of buildings are frequently covered, blacked-out or frosted. Common indicators of meth labs include sporadic traffic throughout the day and night, and trash containing large amounts of empty anti-freeze containers, camping fuel cans, battery parts, stained coffee filters, drain cleaners and glassware. These labs are dangerous, so people are encouraged to contact local law enforcement if they suspect a meth lab in their neighborhood.

A copy of the drug lab cleanup rules, a cleanup guidance document, the *Clandestine Drug Laboratory Site Property List*, as well as other information on meth can be found on the IDHW website at www.healthy.idaho.gov.

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(Editors: For more information please contact IDHW's Jim Faust, Bureau of Community and Environmental Health, at 334-5717 or 1-800-445-8647.)